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Paid maternity leave used by one-third of employed mothers-to-be

Paid maternity leave was used by one-third (34%) of employed mothers-to-be, according to the first detailed survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on the employment circumstances of women who had a child under two years of age.

Paid leave of some sort was taken by just under half (47%) of women working while pregnant.

For employed mothers-to-be who returned to work after giving birth, the average break from employment was just under seven months for those women who had a child under the age of two at the time of interview.

Recent starters (those who had worked for an employer for less than a year) were far less likely (53%) to have taken some leave or time away for childbirth. In comparison the majority (87%) of women who had worked for the same employer for five years or more took some leave or time away. Recent starters were also far less likely (16%) to have used paid leave for the birth than were the long term workers (67%)

Of mothers with their youngest child under two, almost two in five (39%) had been employed after the birth, with most jobs being part-time (82%) and nearly half (45%) 15 hours or less per week.

For mothers with their youngest child under four months, 8% were currently employed compared to 48% of mothers whose youngest child was aged between one and two years.

Of all mothers currently employed the most common work arrangements used to assist with child care were flexible working hours (44%), permanent part-time work (39%) and working from home (27%).

Where a mother's partner after the birth of her youngest child was also her partner during pregnancy, the most common work arrangement used by such partners to care for the child was flexible working hours (19% of these partners).

More details are available in **Pregnancy and Employment Transitions, Australia, November 2005** (cat. no. 4913.0).

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